

# **Indiana Soldiers and Sailors Children's Home Evaluation, Assessment, Options and Recommendation**

## **Executive Summary**

### **Part 1: Early History**

The Home was privately founded in 1865 to provide care, education and maintenance to the orphaned and destitute children of Civil War Union Army veterans. In 1867, the State assumed control of the Home.

In the late 1890's, concern for the Home's future grew because the number of Civil War veterans' orphans was dwindling. With fewer children needing care, the Home's demise was inevitable. The legislature was persuaded to amend the law to include destitute children of all servicemen who served in any of the authorized campaigns.

The Home underwent numerous name changes between 1865 and 1929. Originally named the Indiana Soldiers and Seamen's Home, in 1929 the Home was renamed the Indiana Soldiers and Sailors Children's Home. Morton Memorial School began as a four room schoolhouse prior to 1900. The present building was erected in 1927.

The establishment of the home is covered in IC 16-33-4-53. The admissions criteria of the Home are covered in IC 16-33-4-10.

### **Part 2: Evaluation and Assessment**

As part of its responsibility to students and residents, their families, our employees and the taxpayers, the Indiana State Department of Health evaluated and assessed the educational and business model in effect at the Indiana Soldiers and Sailors Children's Home.

The ISDH also employed DOE, OMB, FSSA and architectural contractors to evaluate the institution.

The focus of this assessment was to determine how effectively the current model achieved the ISSCH defined mission statement: *"The mission of the ISSCH is to be a safe mentoring community where Indiana's at risk youth are given opportunities to excel."*

After evaluation and assessment, the following observations and conclusions can be made:

- ISSCH lacks a clear mission, as the term "at risk youth" is not defined. The school administration loosely interprets the mission through the screening process for admissions.
- The institution's responsibility outside the classroom amounts to little more than parental and day care support.

- The State is providing direct care in home communities that is already available through local communities.
- ISSCH is an institution that does not follow the correct model and trend of supplying education and support in local communities where it can be supported by families, neighbors, non-profit organizations and other local resources.
- ISSCH lacks follow-up measurements. There is little or no data available on children after they leave the Home.
- ISSCH is operationally inefficient. The teacher to student ratio is 1:5. The employee to student ratio is 1.4:1
- ISSCH is fiscally inefficient. The cost of educating a student is \$91,205.06 per year. The cost per day of education is \$249.88. When factored on a 188-day classroom calendar, the cost jumps to \$485.13 per day.
- The cost to modernize the physical plant ranges from an estimated minimum of \$65,000,000 up to \$200,000,000.

### Part 3: Options

The ISDH investigated and reviewed several sound options and alternatives in an attempt to utilize the current school and function in a more efficient manner:

1. **Convert to a Charter School:** Per legal counsel, charter school law applies to public schools. If the ISSCH is administered by a state agency, it will not meet the definition of a public school. Without state support, the school would collapse as it lacks an adequate revenue stream.
2. **Partner with a Post-Secondary Institution:** Several colleges and vocational schools were contacted to explore the possibility of ISSCH becoming a vocational feeder school with the potential for vertical growth. The geographic location, high overhead costs and inadequate revenue stream blocked implementation.
3. **Partner with Organizations Offering Parallel Services:** Several profit and non-profit organizations were approached in an effort to cooperate, privatize or merge the institution with other established services to create opportunities and efficiencies. Road blocks for creating this type of partnership include the present outdated care giving model, lack of revenue, aged physical plant, geographic location, high overhead costs, high operational costs and the need to change the legislative code.
4. **Change the Mission:** After evaluation, a mission could not be developed that was not ineffective, inefficient, and redundant.
5. **Transition to another State Agency:** Several state agencies were approached regarding any opportunities the Home or facility might offer. The outdated care giving model, lack of revenue,

aged physical plant, geographic location, high overhead costs, high operational costs and the need to change the legislative code made partnership unfeasible for other agencies.

- 6. Operate Through a Management Contract:** Again, the outdated care giving model, lack of revenue, aged physical plant, geographic location, high overhead costs, and high operational costs made a management contract impractical.

#### Part 4: Recommendations

It is the recommendation of this Office that the Indiana Soldiers and Sailors Children's Home transition students at the Indiana Soldiers' and Sailor's Children's Home in Knightstown, Indiana to community-based school corporations after the conclusion of the spring semester in May.

It is recommended that the school closes its doors at the conclusion of the 2009 school year. During the transition the Indiana State Department of Health should continue to evaluate options for future use of the facility.

Emphasis and priority should be placed on the completion of the educational process this year, smooth transition of the students back to their home communities, securing new jobs for as many employees as possible through the transition process, and fulfilling ISDH responsibilities related to the facility and assets.